



# LEADER'S GUIDE

FOR THE SELF-RELIANCE INITIATIVE



# FOREWORD

## TO STAKE AND WARD LEADERS

Many Church members can improve their self-reliance, which is “the ability, commitment, and effort to provide the spiritual and temporal necessities of life for self and family” (*Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], 6.1.1). Caring for the poor and needy is one of the four divinely appointed responsibilities of the Church (Handbook 2, 2.2). This leader guide will aid you in applying doctrinal principles that will help members help themselves and others to become more spiritually and temporally self-reliant.

Please take a few minutes to read the letter from the First Presidency found on the next page to learn some of the promised blessings of self-reliance that members in your stake (or district) and ward (or branch) can receive.

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# MESSAGE FROM THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

Brothers and Sisters:

The Lord has declared, “It is my purpose to provide for my saints” (D&C 104:15). This revelation is a promise from the Lord that He will provide temporal blessings and open the door of self-reliance, which is the ability for us to provide the necessities of life for ourselves and our family members.

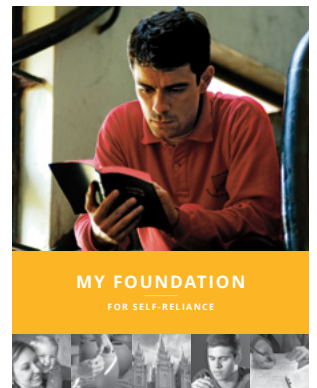
The booklet *My Foundation for Self-Reliance* has been prepared to help members of the Church learn and put into practice principles of faith, education, hard work, and trust in the Lord. Accepting and living these principles will better enable you to receive the temporal blessings promised by the Lord.

We invite you to diligently study and apply these principles and teach them to your family members. As you do so, your life will be blessed. You will learn how to act on your path toward greater self-reliance. You will be blessed with greater hope, peace, and progress.

Please be assured that you are a child of our Father in Heaven. He loves you and will never forsake you. He knows you and is ready to extend to you the spiritual and temporal blessings of self-reliance.

Sincerely,

The First Presidency



# SELF-RELIANCE INITIATIVE

## DOCTRINE AND PRINCIPLES OF SELF-RELIANCE

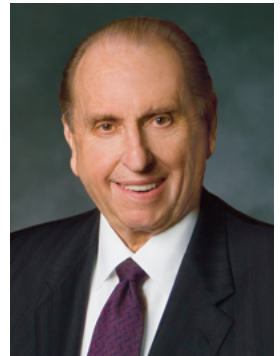
Self-reliance is defined as “the ability, commitment, and effort to provide the spiritual and temporal necessities of life for self and family. As members become self-reliant, they are also better able to serve and care for others” (Handbook 2, 6.1.1). Three key teachings can help us understand how to lead self-reliant lives:

**First**, self-reliance is an essential commandment in the plan of salvation. President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “The Church and its members are commanded by the Lord to be self-reliant and independent. (See D&C 78:13–14.) The responsibility for each person’s social, emotional, spiritual, physical, or economic well-being rests first upon himself, second upon his family, and third upon the Church if he is a faithful member thereof” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2006], 116).

**Second**, God can and will provide a way for His righteous children to become self-reliant. “And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine” (D&C 104:15).

**Third**, all things, including temporal concerns, are spiritual matters to God (see D&C 29:34). As we commit to living the gospel more fully, we can become more self-reliant both temporally and spiritually. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf taught: “The two great commandments—to love God and our neighbor—are a joining of the temporal and the spiritual. . . . Like two sides of a coin, the temporal and spiritual are inseparable” (Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Providing in the Lord’s Way,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 53).

Some of the gospel principles that can help us be more self-reliant include increasing faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, becoming more obedient, repenting of our mistakes, using our agency righteously, and serving others. For more information, refer to the booklet *My Foundation for Self-Reliance*.



*“Self-reliance is a product of our work and undergirds all other welfare practices. . . . ‘Let us work for what we need. Let us be self-reliant and independent. Salvation can be obtained on no other principle.’”*

**THOMAS S. MONSON**  
(QUOTING MARION G. ROMNEY), “Guiding Principles of Personal and Family Welfare,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1986, 3

## THE SELF-RELIANCE INITIATIVE IS PRIESTHOOD-LEADER DIRECTED

The stakes of Zion are places of security that protect all who enter. The purpose of the stake is to be “a defense, and . . . a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out . . . upon the whole earth” (D&C 115:6). Stakes are gathering places where Church members can serve and strengthen each other, become unified, and receive priesthood ordinances and gospel instructions (Handbook 1, introduction).

The Lord said to priesthood leaders, “I have given unto you . . . the keys . . . for the work of the ministry and the perfecting of my saints” (D&C 124:143). President Dieter F. Uchtdorf taught: “The Lord’s way of self-reliance involves in a balanced way many facets of life, including education, health, employment, family finances, and spiritual strength. . . . What this means is that, in large measure, you’re going to have to figure it out for yourself. Every family, every congregation, every area of the world is different” (“Providing in the Lord’s Way,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 55).

The self-reliance initiative is a tool that stake presidents and bishops can use to help with their divinely appointed responsibility to care for the poor and those in need.

### Stake Self-Reliance Committee

To understand and respond to the self-reliance needs in their stake, the stake presidency may organize a stake self-reliance committee as part of the stake council. The stake self-reliance committee is chaired by a member of the stake presidency and meets regularly to review and plan for self-reliance needs in the stake. Stake self-reliance committees are encouraged to work with the bishops’ welfare council to assess and address those needs.

The stake self-reliance committee typically includes a member of the high council, a member of the stake Relief Society presidency, the chairman of the bishops’ welfare council, and any called stake self-reliance specialists. Other committee members may include members of the stake Young Men and Young Women presidencies, additional stake specialists, and missionaries.



*“There is no new organization necessary to take care of the needs of this people. All that is necessary is to put the priesthood of God to work.”*

**HAROLD B. LEE,**  
**“Admonitions for the Priesthood of God,”**  
*Ensign*, Jan. 1973, 104



### Self-Reliance Committee's Role

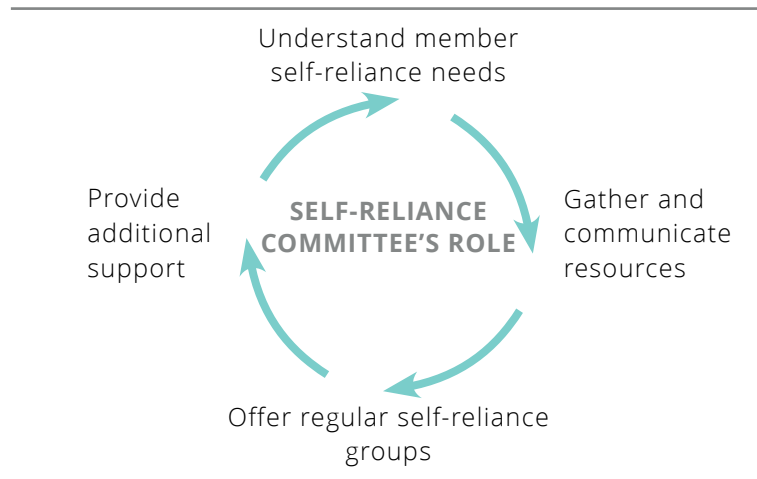
In reviewing and planning for the needs of individuals and families in the stake, the committee considers the following:

- Teaching bishops and ward councils about the doctrine of self-reliance and supporting them with their duties.
- Developing a simple plan to support bishops and provide for the self-reliance needs of the stake. Refer to “Questions for Committees to Consider” on page 9.
- Offering regular self-reliance devotionals and organizing self-reliance groups.
- Providing ongoing training to facilitators as needed.
- Visiting self-reliance group meetings periodically and sharing feedback about member progress with bishops and ward councils.
- Gathering and communicating local resources available in the community and from the Church. Resources may include names of people who can help, government programs, employment opportunities, etc. The local Self-Reliance Services manager can also provide guidance in ways to gather and share community resources.



*“It has always been a cardinal teaching with the Latter-day Saints, that a religion which has not the power to save people temporarily and make them prosperous and happy here, cannot be depended upon to save them spiritually, to exalt them in the life to come.”*

**PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (2011), 163**



## Stake Self-Reliance Specialist

A sister, brother, or couple may serve as a stake (or district) self-reliance specialist. Working closely with committee members, a specialist oversees self-reliance operations and activities within the stake. Stake specialists serve as a resource for bishops and other ward leaders (Handbook 2, 6.3.3) and may help members with needs such as education, training, family finances, and the Perpetual Education Fund where applicable (Handbook 2, 6.2.5). A bishop may also call ward (or branch) self-reliance specialists as needed.

The specialist's responsibilities may include the following:

- Train and assist bishops and ward councils as requested.
- Work with the stake self-reliance committee to coordinate devotionals and organize groups.
- Provide training to self-reliance group facilitators, using the *Facilitating Groups for Self-Reliance* booklet (available online at [srs.lds.org/facilitator](https://srs.lds.org/facilitator)).
- Periodically observe and support self-reliance groups.
- Share available community and Church resources with members.
- Ensure that reports are completed at [srs.lds.org/report](https://srs.lds.org/report).

## HOW MEMBERS LEARN AND ACT TO BECOME SELF-RELIANT

It starts with bishoprics and ward councils prayerfully considering those with challenges that could benefit from greater self-reliance. Ideally, a personal invitation is extended to either attend a devotional (if offered) or directly join a self-reliance group. In addition, consider inviting those who could strengthen others with their time and talents to participate (see D&C 82:18–19).



*"It is God's will that we be free men and women enabled to rise to our full potential both temporally and spiritually, that we be free from the humiliating limitations of poverty and the bondage of sin, that we enjoy self-respect and independence, that we be prepared in all things to join Him in His celestial kingdom."*

**D. TODD CHRISTOFFERSON,**  
**"Free Forever, to Act for Themselves,"** *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 19

## Members Meet in Self-Reliance Groups

The Savior taught that “where two or three are gathered together in my name, as touching one thing, behold, there will I be in the midst of them” (D&C 6:32). Self-reliance groups are small, action-oriented councils. They meet together to help build the skills and faith of each participant. Personal revelation during group meetings can come from many different sources. Besides the manuals, every participant has knowledge, experiences, and gifts that can help others learn and grow.

A group typically consists of 8 to 12 individuals and meets for about two hours each week for up to 12 weeks.

## HOW GROUPS WORK

### Both Doctrine and Life Skills Are Taught

During each group meeting, participants spend time reviewing doctrinal principles of self-reliance, including the importance of ordinances. They also learn practical skills such as managing personal finances, finding a better job, increasing education, or starting and growing a small business.

### Groups Make Commitments and Report their Progress

Each group meeting begins with individuals reporting progress to the group on their commitments from the previous week. Participants then counsel together to identify and overcome obstacles.



*Self-reliance groups address the three things President Gordon B. Hinckley said every convert needs: “a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing with the ‘good word of God’ (Moroni 6:4).”*

**PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY, “Converts and Young Men,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 47; see also Moroni 6:3–9**



## Participants Share their Learning with Family Members

Much of the learning takes place outside of the group meeting as members keep their commitments by practicing new skills. Participants are encouraged to share what they learn with family members.

## Participants Strengthen Each Other As “Action Partners”

Participants are asked to support and strengthen another member of the group each week. These “action partners” help each other keep their commitments through regular contact and encouragement.

## Facilitators Direct Weekly Group Meetings

Self-reliance groups are not led by a teacher but are directed by a facilitator. Facilitators do not lecture but rather follow the course materials and invite all group members to participate. Facilitators create an environment where the Holy Ghost can teach participants “all things what [they] should do” (2 Nephi 32:5; see also 2 Nephi 32:3).

## Ongoing Progress

If needed, stake specialists, volunteers, or home and visiting teachers may be assigned to follow up with or mentor individual participants by phone or in person. The stake self-reliance committee may also choose to periodically organize a gathering of self-reliance group graduates so that participants can continue friendships, share experiences, and review principles from *My Foundation for Self-Reliance*.



*“There is no problem in the family, ward, or stake that cannot be solved if we look for solutions in the Lord’s way by counseling—really counseling—with one another.”*

**M. RUSSELL BALLARD,**  
*Counseling with Our Councils, rev. ed.*  
(2012), 4

## WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN GROUPS?

*Members in the following situations may benefit: fast-offering recipients, the unemployed or underemployed, recently returned missionaries, recent converts, less-active members, and single parents.*



# RESOURCES

## Church Employee and Volunteer Support

The Church employs people in each area to assist in the self-reliance effort. These include a Self-Reliance Services manager and other staff. These employees, along with full-time senior missionaries, can help train the stake self-reliance committee to organize devotionals and self-reliance groups. They can also assist the committee in identifying and sharing local community and Church resources.

## Manuals

Self-reliance manuals are available online in Gospel Library and at [srs.lds.org](https://srs.lds.org). Printed manuals can be ordered at [store.lds.org](https://store.lds.org) or at Church distribution centers.

MANUAL	USE	ITEM NUMBER (For Ordering):
<i>My Path for Self-Reliance</i>	Self-Reliance Devotionals	14068000
<i>My Foundation for Self-Reliance</i>	Spiritual Principles and Skills.	14067000 (Note: Also included in each group workbook)
<i>Starting and Growing My Business</i>	Group Workbook	14678000
<i>Find a Better Job</i>	Group Workbook	14072000
<i>Education for Better Work</i>	Group Workbook	14066000
<i>Personal Finances</i>	Group Workbook	14863000



*“Without self-reliance one cannot exercise these innate desires to serve. How can we give if there is nothing there? Food for the hungry cannot come from empty shelves. Money to assist the needy cannot come from an empty purse. Support and understanding cannot come from the emotionally starved. Teaching cannot come from the unlearned. And most important of all, spiritual guidance cannot come from the spiritually weak.”*

**MARION G. ROMNEY,**  
**“The Celestial Nature of Self-Reliance,”** *Ensign*,  
Nov. 1982, 93

## Self-Reliance Devotionals

Members typically (although not necessary) start on the path to self-reliance by attending a devotional. The *My Path for Self-Reliance* booklet can help guide the discussion.

## Training Videos and Success Stories

Training materials and success story videos are available online at [srs.lds.org/videos](https://srs.lds.org/videos).

## Self-Reliance Resource Center

A stake may decide to establish a self-reliance resource center to address needs beyond self-reliance groups. For example, a “center” could be a physical space shared with a family history center and could provide computers to help members. A “center” could even be a virtual effort to connect members with local opportunities and online resources. If a center is a physical location, each stake would decide how often the center is open and how it's staffed.

## Questions for Committees to Consider

- What self-reliance needs exist with individuals and families in our area?
- How can we support bishops, quorums, and the Relief Society in their role to care for the poor and those in need?
- How can we better help bishops and ward councils to identify and invite people to participate in our self-reliance efforts?
- What can we do during and after self-reliance groups to better support participants?
- How can we better help people who can't attend or finish a self-reliance group?
- How can we better utilize the talents, skills, and expertise of members in our area?
- What kind of Church or community resources do our members need, and how should we develop and share these resources?
- How can we use our self-reliance efforts to support stake and ward priorities? (For example, missionary work, member reactivation, young single adults, or youth.)
- If applicable, how can we help Perpetual Education Fund recipients graduate and repay their loans?

THE CHURCH OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Self-Reliance Services  
PERPETUAL EDUCATION FUND

